

**FISCAL YEAR 2002 OVERSIGHT HEARING**

**TESTIMONY OF**

**ANDREW ALTMAN**

**DIRECTOR, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE OF PLANNING**

**BEFORE**

**THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA'S**

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**March 14, 2003**

## **I. Introduction and Overview**

Good afternoon Chairman Cropp and members of the Committee of the Whole. I am pleased to be here today to share with the Committee the accomplishments of the Office of Planning during fiscal year 2002 and the first quarter of FY 2003. As has been the case for the past two years, the Office's accomplishments would not have been possible without the support provided by this Committee, the Council and the Mayor. I want to thank you, Chairman Cropp, and all the other members of the Committee for your unflagging support not only during the past 15 months, but over the past three-and-a-half years as well.

As the Chair and members of the Committee are aware, the Office of Planning was called upon to join all other District agencies in making severe budget cuts for FY 2003. The reductions we agreed to take in FY 2003 have hit us exceptionally hard. The Office of Planning's share is \$807,887, which accounts for 11% of our total FY 2003 budget, and 35% of our discretionary Non Personal Services budget. We had to take significant cuts in contracts, equipment purchases, and supplies. As a result we had to make cuts to our land use mediation program, reduce or eliminate some planned zoning studies, and delay launching planning studies until later in FY 2003, when alternative funds are secured, or until next fiscal year. We are on track to achieve our budget savings, but the Council and District residents should be aware that these cuts to our FY 2003 budget have caused OP to delay starting projects and delayed hiring of some positions.

The past seventeen months have been the most exciting for me as Director of the Office of Planning, and has been characterized by three broad themes: first, the Office has been extraordinarily prolific, completing an average of one significant plan a week, second, we have begun turning plans into concrete actions, and third, we have built a strong operations capability within the Office of Planning.

Prolific Output: The amount of product that the Office of Planning completed in FY 2002 is truly extraordinary, and is largely the result of the early support provided to the Office by both the Mayor and this Council. In FY 2002 and the early part of 2003, OP produced 39 SNAP plans, calling for direct government action throughout the city.

Examples from the literally hundreds of actions that resulted from those plans include:

- For Ward 1, the allocation of \$900,000 for the provision of a “safety net” for tenants living in buildings with code violations.
- For Ward 2, \$500,000 was budgeted to initiate a streetscape design study for P Street, NW.
- For Ward 3, the government has committed to install numerous traffic signals at dangerous intersections, inventory and repair street signs throughout the Ward, and develop traffic calming criteria.
- For Ward 4, a \$14 million commitment to renovate the Takoma Recreation Center and Pool.
- For Ward 5, the budgeting of \$7 million for the Restore DC neighborhood revitalization program that will have a significant impact in the Ward.

- For Ward 6, a multi-agency commitment to the revitalization of H Street, NE.
- For Ward 7, streetscape improvements and a commitment of over \$3 million for improvements to Hillcrest Recreation Center and Fort David Community Center.
- For Ward 8, hundreds of thousands of dollars for planning and design of streetscape improvements along MLK Avenue.

Again, this list only scratches the surface of the hundreds of other similar commitments that the Mayor has made to city residents as a result of the SNAPs.

Additionally, we completed the Mayor's TOD Policy, TOD Design Guidelines, Southeast Waterfront Plan, AWI Framework Plan, South Capitol Street Plan, Southwest Waterfront Draft Plan, Kingman Island Plan, Commercial Design Guidelines, Draft Mount Vernon Triangle plan, and the Neighborhood 10 Strategy. We also began and continue to be deeply involved in the District's baseball siting efforts and have produced along with Deputy Mayor Price's office several RFP's for important development sites, including the existing convention center.

As the Members of the Council are all too aware, plans without action have little value. That is why I am especially excited that FY 2002 marked the beginning of what I hope to be an ongoing commitment from the City and its partners to turn plans into concrete action.

Plans into Action: I have attached to my testimony a Planning Results Matrix that presents in great detail all of the FY 2002 actions that have resulted from our planning efforts. The Matrix is thirteen pages long, and in the interest of time I will mention only a few of the highlights. Each of the 39 SNAPs has been integrated into every single District government agency's budget formulation process. There is now a master database that our office developed with the City Administrator's office to track agency progress on achieving the SNAP goals. Our professionalized zoning function has resulted in an unprecedented amount of development taking place on parcels of land that would otherwise be home to cracked pavement, abandoned cars and overgrown weeds.

Several of our plans have directly resulted in the District obtaining added federal funding it otherwise would not have received, including \$10 million in the President's current budget for development of a riverwalk, \$2 million in federal funds for improvements called for under the Near Southeast Plan, and \$500,000 in federal grant money for an expanded transportation study of South Capitol Street. In addition, our Reservation 13 plan directly resulted in the federal government transferring title to that valuable parcel to the District of Columbia. I urge the Chair and Members of the Committee to more fully study the 13-page matrix attached to my testimony to get a more detailed view of other results that have flowed and continue to flow from our plans.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the development and strengthening of our operational support infrastructure.

Operations Infrastructure: The Office of Planning has rapidly moved from a situation a few short years ago where the Director and Deputy Directors and almost all staff did their own procurements, hiring, budgeting, supply purchases, and other daily operational tasks to a situation today where these and other operational functions are virtually invisible. This is a good thing. We have built what I believe to be one of the strongest GIS departments in the country.

As I will detail later in my testimony, the Office of Planning's contracting and procurement, budgeting, customer service, risk management and GIS functions serve as models for other agencies.

I will now discuss in detail how these themes apply to the Office of Planning's divisions.

## **II. Neighborhood and Revitalization Planning**

In discussing the Neighborhood and Revitalization planning functions of the Office of Planning, I will divide my comments among our Neighborhood Efforts, our Citywide Efforts, our Anacostia Waterfront Efforts and our Downtown Efforts.

### **Neighborhood Efforts:**

In September 2002, the Office of Planning completed and issued 39 Strategic Neighborhood Action Plans (SNAPs). Neighborhood Planners met regularly with

Neighborhood Service and Neighborhood Outreach Coordinators to address quality of life issues and to respond to SNAP action items. To ensure agency accountability to the SNAPs, the Office of Planning oversaw the creation of the online database, which will be used as a tool to measure an agency's effectiveness in addressing SNAP items. The database was completed and released in January 2003.

The Neighborhood Planners immediately sought to follow through on the SNAP by pursuing small areas plans. In FY 2002, Neighborhood Planning identified one small area plan to start in each ward.

To better coordinate the Neighborhood Planning function and these planning efforts, the Office of Planning hired a Deputy Director for Neighborhood Planning. The new deputy has extensive experience in neighborhood planning and will provide direct supervision to complete the plans in FY 2003.

In Ward 1, Identified Columbia Heights Public Realm identified for small area plan development.

In Ward 2, the Office of Planning released an RFP for the Convention Center Area Strategic Development Plan. Interviews have been conducted and work on this initiative will begin on this in February 2003.

The Office of Planning served on the Kennedy Center Access Study Steering committee, ensuring that the interests of the District of Columbia are taken into consideration as part of the Federal, multi-million dollar effort to better connect the Kennedy Center to adjacent neighborhoods.

On neighborhood transportation issues, the Office of Planning worked with WCCA and DDOT to ensure that the all transportation plans for the new convention center are in place and operational and worked with DDOT to develop the scope of work for the planning and design of streetscapes on P Street, 14<sup>th</sup> Street, and the area around the Washington Convention Center.

Convention Center Area Neighborhood Plan identified for small area plan development.

In Ward 3, in June 2002 the Office of Planning began work on the Upper Wisconsin Avenue Corridor Study — a study was requested in the SNAP for Cluster 11. The community planning process was launched in December 2002. The Strategic Development Plan for Wisconsin Avenue is intended to guide redevelopment opportunities to be in harmony with the existing development, take advantage of the proximity to transit, attract a better mix of uses and create a better sense of place.

Upper Wisconsin Avenue Corridor Study identified for small area plan development.

In Ward 4, the Office of Planning completed the Takoma Central District Plan (TCDP), which was approved by Council in June 2002. The TCDP was the first small area plan completed undertaken under Williams' Administration. In October 2002, the Takoma Transportation Study was initiated, which was an implementation item identified in the TCDP. Continuing on SNAP implementation, the Office of Planning initiated the rezoning of industrial properties along Spring Place and Blair Road in Takoma in December 2002. The Zoning Commission Public Hearing scheduled March 17, 2003.

The Office of Planning also fulfilled and supported a number of SNAP actions: the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro Station Site Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) was issued August 2002; an RFP was released for Georgia Petworth Metro Station Site and Corridor Study in November 2002 and consultants are being interviewed to start the community planning process in February 2003; designation of 14<sup>th</sup> Street Heights as a DC Main Street, \$80,000 funding; Military/Missouri Road Transportation Study, DDOT initiated in January '03; and, the Georgia Avenue Storefront Improvement Program, which has been expanded to include the 7400, 7600, and 7700 blocks.

Petworth Metro Station Area and commercial Plan identified for small area plan development.

In Ward 5, the North Michigan Park Recreation Center is underway and scheduled for completion early to mid-summer 2003; the Turkey Thicket Recreation Center has been demolished and a contractor has been identified to construct a new state of the art

recreation facility on that site; major capitol improvements completed along South Dakota Ave. N.E.; and Rhode Island Ave., N.E., and, the North Capitol/Bloomingdale Main Street Initiative is proceeding on schedule.

Additionally, OP has been working with WMATA and its designated developers for both the Rhode Island Avenue and Fort Totten joint development sites. The Office of Planning has worked hard to make sure that approximately 1,000 housing units will be included in these developments to facilitate TOD connectivity.

Ivy City/Trinidad Neighborhood Plan identified for small area plan development.

In Ward 6, at the request of the local community and Council member Ambrose's office, the Office of Planning has been managing a consultant team in preparing a comprehensive area plan to assist H Street NE stakeholders in outlining priorities for revitalization. The Strategic Development Plan should help realize several key goals: A) enhancement of capital investment in the area; B) promotion of job growth; C) attraction of a mix of neighborhood and regional new businesses (retail, office, and entertainment that are compatible with the adjacent neighborhoods); among others. Well over 400 residents, business owners and community leaders have participated in the planning process to date. As a result of the planning process, the H Street Main Streets organization has been able to enhance their strategic business plan and private developers and property owners have been contacting the District and the NCRC to

discuss opportunities for new housing and commercial development along the corridor. The final plan will be completed in early March 2003.

Environmental Health Administration has completed an Environmental Risk Assessment for Kingman and Heritage Islands following up on the community plan developed by the Office of Planning in FY2001. EHA and the Department of Parks and Recreation will begin implementation of habitat restoration and recreational enhancements during FY2003 to create a recreational and environmental education resource for the District and local neighborhoods.

In March 2002, the Office of Planning completed a Draft Master Plan for Public Reservation 13 as requested by the community in the Cluster 26 SNAP. The Plan outlines an efficient reuse plan for the parcel to include public health, District agency offices and direct services, education, housing, and retail uses. The plan features an extension of Massachusetts Avenue SE down to the Anacostia waterfront and substantial parks and open space.

The Office of Planning worked collaboratively with the community and developer in gaining approval for redevelopment of the Bryan School for housing uses. This was a model process that resulted in an excellent development project, valuable community amenity, and open participation

As the lead in the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, the Office of Planning has been tremendously active in this neighborhood including participating in the successful bid for a HOPE VI grant for the Arthur Capper and Carrolsburg properties, design review of the

Marine Barracks BEQ facility, planning and zoning of the Southeast Federal Center, and reviewing numerous development projects in the community.

The Office of Planning worked closely with the National Capitol Revitalization Corporation in acquiring property in the southwest waterfront including the former Hogate's property soon to reopen as the Cantina Marina offering much needed and much improved services to the Southwest neighborhood.

Potomac Avenue Metro Area Plan identified for small area plan development.

In Ward 7, OP has been working closely with other District government agencies in moving forward the government centers project at Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road. In addition, OP has been working closely with other District housing agencies to prepare application materials for the Eastgate HOPE VI project. Also in Ward 7, the Office of Planning provided technical support for the feasibility analysis for retail development along Pennsylvania Avenue SE for the Pennsylvania Avenue Task Force

In Ward 8, the Office provided analytical support and outreach for the Bellevue Initiative, which was created to improve the commercial and retail opportunities, increase home ownership and housing choices, improve the quality of the infrastructure, enhance workforce and youth development opportunities and promote public safety in the Bellevue Neighborhood.

In Spring 2002, OP began its first steps towards the redevelopment of the St. Elizabeth campus. With the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and the General Services Administration (GSA), an ULI Development Panel was convened, being together national development

and preservation experts, for a weeklong exercise to develop conceptual strategies for the reuse of the campus and a process for implementation. The Panel utilized existing data and interviews with numerous stakeholders, including 20 area residents and two public meetings on the St. Elizabeth campus, to come up with preliminary recommendations that will guide a more comprehensive planning process. Later in the fall, OP with the Department of Mental Health selected a consultant team of local firms to develop a comprehensive Framework Plan for both the east and west campus. The planning process will be a 12-week effort, including up to four community workshops and monthly meetings with a citizen steering committee. The plan is scheduled to be completed by October 2003.

The Office of Planning also identified and highlighted areas in Ward 8 as part of OP's new Transit Oriented Development initiative and identified the Congress Heights neighborhood for strategic small area plan.

Responding to specific SNAP requests, the Office of Planning identified and highlighted linkages to the Metro Station and the Frederick Douglas National Historic Site as part of the Poplar Point Plan through AWI; studied potential zoning changes on commercial corridors to allow increased density that takes into account the historic district and its character and identified opportunities for new development.

Historic Anacostia Neighborhood Plan identified for small area plan development.

## **Citywide Efforts**

1. **ReStore DC/Citywide Commercial Revitalization Initiative:** In April 2002, the Mayor announced the award of the District's first five (5) Main Street designations. The neighborhoods included Upper 14<sup>th</sup> Street (Ward 4); 14<sup>th</sup> Street (Ward 1); North Capitol (Ward 5); H Street (Ward 6;) and 8<sup>th</sup> Street, SE (Ward 6). As one of the lead agencies working with the Deputy Mayor's office, OP's Commercial Revitalization Specialist, as well as the neighborhood planners provided technical assistance to all applicants in preparing their comprehensive applications. As these five organizations began work on their five-year plan, OP staff continues to support their efforts through engagement in area planning efforts and access to information technology resources. Also this year, OP published "Thrive: a Storefront Design Guideline Manual", designed to help local property owners, business owners and community organizations implement storefront improvements in neighborhood commercial districts. The manual is also used by the Department of Housing and Community Development in its monitoring of projects funding through its Façade Improvement Program.
  
2. **Transit Oriented Development (TOD):** In Summer 2002, OP released two publications as an end result of work completed by the Mayoral Task Force on Transit-Oriented Development. The "Task Force Report to Mayor Williams" recommends TOD as an appropriate strategy for the District and articulates targeted solutions and recommendations including community education,

engagement and planning programs; TOD zoning and design; targeted incentives; federal, private and regional partnerships and opportunities for dedicated funding. The second publication “Transformation: Recreating Transit-Oriented Neighborhood Centers in Washington, DC” is a tool designed primarily for residents to be better equipped to participate in local design and development efforts in neighborhood metro station and transit corridor areas. Development of the design handbook included a day-long workshop and training session for ANCs and community leaders, who gave valuable input into the issues that the document addresses. Also in 2002, OP continued its work in directing thoughtful TOD efforts several neighborhood metro station areas.

3. **NCRC Collaboration:** OP has worked closely with the NCRC on the Wax Museum, Columbia Heights RFPS and the SW area plan as well as Skyland and H Street. This role continues to involve review of development projects as they move from schematic design to construction, with the purpose of ensuring the original goals of previous planning efforts and the Request for Proposals are being met.

### **Anacostia Waterfront Initiative**

This year, the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (“AWI”) continued its work in completed the overall Framework Plan for the 1100 acre project area, but also increased its role in

coordinating several planning and implementation efforts with the study area all with an emphasis on the neighborhood target areas.

1. **Reservation 13:** In March 2002, the Office of Planning completed a Draft Master Plan for Public Reservation 13 as requested by the community in the Cluster 26 SNAP. The Plan outlines an efficient reuse plan for the parcel to include public health, District agency offices and direct services, education, housing, and retail uses. The plan features an extension of Massachusetts Avenue SE down to the Anacostia waterfront and substantial parks and open space. As a result of the planning process, the District was able to complete the land transfer process from the Federal government to the District of Columbia.
  
2. **Capper/Carrollsbury HOPE VI:** Over the past several months' OP has been working closely with DCHA in its next phase of planning and development to include a planned unit development (PUD) application construction for over 1500 new housing units in the Near Southeast neighborhood. Our collective efforts have focused on the provision for 1:1 replacement of public housing units in the neighborhood; the creation of a new public park on publicly-owned land; and ensuring the development of housing along M Street. The Housing Authority anticipated filing the PUD application in February 2003. The net result of this effort will total an investment of over \$300 million in this important waterfront neighborhood.

3. **Southeast Federal Center:** This year, OP and GSA completed a “consensus plan” for the 55-acre site on the near southeast waterfront, marking what we hope will become a new model for city/federal collaboration and planning. The result of the planning effort was a framework plan and development program that would meet the goals and objectives of the progressive legislation that mandates that this valuable site be redeveloped for public and private development.
4. **Waterside Mall:** 2002, saw the continued coordination efforts between the District, Kaempfer Company and Forest City and the National Park Service, including numerous public meetings with the community regarding the re-opening of 4<sup>th</sup> street, its design and its transportation impacts. As a result, the project will move forward for zoning approval this February, final negotiations with Safeway as the anchor retail tenant are being finalized and the design process for 4<sup>th</sup> street will commence.
5. **Southwest Waterfront Plan:** Engaging over 500 residents over the course of the year, OP with NCRC completed the development plan for the Southwest waterfront. This plan received NCRC Board approval this fall, confirming NCRC’s commitment to transform this important stretch of the waterfront and extension of the National Mall into a vibrant waterfront residential and cultural area.

6. **South Capitol Street:** The Office of Planning's work on the South Capitol Street improvement efforts has led to added funding for the District of \$500,000 for further transportation study work. Working with NCPC, OP also completed an urban design study for the South Capitol Street area, and began an effort to ensure that land use regulations are consistent with design and planning elements in the area.
7. **Kingman Island** – OP worked with numerous federal and local agencies to establish a multi-million dollar habitat restoration and recreational enhancement program with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. We have worked extremely closely with the community and have established a Stakeholder Steering Committee. I am particularly pleased that we have been able to secure outside funding of over \$100,000 for a 9/11 Memorial Tree Grove.

### **Downtown Action Plan**

Originally announced in November 2001, the Downtown Action Plan focused on creating a living downtown through introduction of new retail and residential development; directing commercial growth to new areas; and linking economic benefits from downtown to the neighborhoods. This year the process had a series of major successes:

1. **Existing Convention Center Redevelopment RFP:** In 2002, OP reached one of its most significant downtown milestones with the Council approval and release

of the Request for Proposals for a Development partner for the reuse of the existing convention center site. The RFP marked the culmination of a two-year effort started by the Mayor, who with OP and a downtown task force drafted a vision for the site as a vibrant, mixed-use Washington destination, where residential, retail and a programmable civic open space were core uses of the reuse strategy. The vision also suggests the possibility of a new central library and a performance venue to help create a place in the city truly becomes a place for all Washingtonians. The RFP was released in September 2002, and seven responses were received in December from local, national and international teams. OP, with the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development will manage the evaluation process and make recommendations to the Deputy Mayor and Mayor for final selection in June 2003.

2. **Convention Center HQ Hotel RFP:** OP provided significant staff support to the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development in its efforts to secure the selection of a developer and operator a new headquarters hotel for the new convention center. After nine months of intensive negotiations, the District selected a development team that will position the facility at Massachusetts Avenue, a site that will become another great anchor development to the emerging hospitality district that includes the convention center, new City Museum and redevelopment of the existing g convention center site.

3. **Mt. Vernon Triangle:** Over the past year, OP has continued its efforts with the Mount Vernon Triangle Alliance, a group of private property owners in the area north of Massachusetts Avenue to further the goals of residential development as stated in the Downtown Action Agenda. This effort has resulted in the development of a draft action plan for the area that includes recommendations for priority public realm improvements, design guidelines for both public and private development and phasing for the disposition of publicly held lands. Like our efforts on the Wax Museum site, OP will further this work by submitting a Request for Proposals for another District-owned parcel at 5<sup>th</sup> and I Street to the Council approval this year. The Action Plan will be released for public input this spring.
4. **Request for Proposals –Franklin School –** Another key goal of the downtown action agenda was realized this year with the drafting of the Request for Proposals for the Franklin School building. OP worked with Deputy Mayor Price's office to lead an effort that included extensive economic and historic preservation analysis, and public outreach to community constituents to help define to a reuse program for the site that would achieve downtown revitalization objectives. The release of the RFP is anticipated later in 2003.

### III. **Development Review**

In FY2002, the Development Review Division significantly exceeded its FY 2001 accomplishments. The fully staffed division processed 131 BZA cases and 55 zoning cases. These numbers are almost double that of FY01. These cases represent over 1600 new or refurbished units of housing and contribute to over 12 million square feet of commercial development. On a smaller scale the cases also represent 34 homeowners that needed relief for investment in home improvements.

The Development Review Division has also been able to respond to neighborhood concerns by working with communities to implement two major SNAP initiatives - a tree and slope overlay and participation in the inclusionary housing task force. The division staff has begun zoning plans for many of the major planning initiatives that have been shaped over the past three years, such as the Mt Vernon Square, H Street Corridor, Southeast Federal Center and Reservation 13. The staff has also worked to facilitate the necessary zoning for major city projects such as the Unified Communications Center, the Benning Road Transfer Station, the Department of Mental Health's new forensic hospital and new zoning regulations to update new facilities for the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Police Department.

#### **a. Zoning and Land Use Regulation**

The Land Use Regulation office has been continuing to process development applications, which remain at record levels. In FY 02 OP processed over 200 zoning cases, 26 Environmental Impact Screening Forms and over 100 antenna, roof and

Chinatown permits. This is almost a fifty percent increase from FY01. The Development Review division made recommendations on all street and alley closings, prepared the planning component of Environmental Impact Screening Form reviews, and antenna and roof structure reviews and managed the Large Tract Review process for projects over 3 acres outside the Downtown. The Division also certified compliance with Downtown Development District requirements and approve covenants for Transfers of Development Rights and combined lot developments, in addition to providing input on Chinatown design issues and serving on the Public Space Committee, the body which grants permits to use public space. Such reviews have ensured neighborhoods are protected to the maximum extent possible from adverse impacts while fostering important economic development across the District

While these regulatory/review functions consume the bulk of staff time, over the last fiscal year and four months, the Development Review Division has worked to increase the value of our services to the District through several major initiatives:

- Increased levels of negotiations on design and community amenity issues. This has been especially evident in the PUD's for East Capitol Dwellings and the Washington Clinic site, and in negotiations over other large scale residential PUD's, especially those east of the River. OP has been able to achieve substantial design improvements in proposed projects, while increasing the level of public benefits provided by these projects.

- Cooperative efforts with other departments, especially the Office of Zoning and the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, to streamline the regulatory process and provide enhanced access to information about development projects for community members, other government agencies and the public at large. OP works especially closely with the newly hired DDOT transportation planners to prepare coordinated and comprehensive recommendations that benefit the public, the applicant and the reviewing authorities by providing a unified approach to project review
- Utilizing resources provided by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer, the staff has worked to provide better graphics in its reports, which makes them easier to understand and more useful to citizens and the members of the Zoning Commission and the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

Some of the major projects that the Development Review Division has been involved in this year are listed below.

### Housing

The Office of Planning Development Review Division helped secure approval of several major housing projects for a total of well over a thousand new dwelling units. These projects included:

- **4th and Massachusetts:** The Office of Planning recommended the approval of the necessary zoning relief to allow for the construction of this 200 unit apartment building
- **The Bowling Green Apartments at Wilmington Place between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NE** involved the demolition and reconstruction of 126 townhouse style apartments and a community hall that will houses a daycare.
- **The Edgewood Terrace** senior living development will provide 200 units for resident seniors

#### Mixed Use and Commercial Projects

- **Old Hechinger's/Sears Site** – this mixed-use in-fill project is a joint Historic Preservation and zoning project that resulted in 172 new residential units to be developed above an historic commercial building across from a metro station
- **The Mather Building** – this creative development resulted in 40 residential units and 8000 square feet of art space
- **360 Carrol Street, NE-** this transit-oriented mixed use development will provide 58 residential units and 4,500 square feet of commercial across form the Takoma metro station

- **Church Street Lofts**- this projects with 90 residential units and 13,000 square feet of commercial space, is one of several major redevelopment project in the area that is bringing several hundred new residential units to this vibrant new neighborhood
- **Waterside Mall**- this project has been in planning for over a year and through the PUD zoning process will result in a newly renovated commercial center
- **Arena Stage** – this unique Washington landmark represents another balanced project between Historic Preservation and zoning. The project will result in a remodeled theater of 211,000 square feet.

#### Zoning Actions:

- **Takoma Plan**- this new amendment responds to the proposed land use changes as approved by the Council in the Takoma Small Area Plan. OP worked with the development community and property owners to determine the appropriate uses and has taken the necessary zoning action to make the property consistent
- **Campus Plans**- OP analyzed further processing requests for several projects on the George Washington University Campus and a new performing Arts center for Georgetown University. It is also currently reviewing new campus plans for Gallaudet and Catholic Universities.

- **Antenna and Tower Regulations-** OP presented a comprehensive review and revised zoning regulations regarding antennas and towers. The recommendation to the Zoning Commission completed a two year review that included a round table and advisory group

## **Zoning Consistency in progress**

### **Other zoning actions that implemented the Comprehensive Plan included:**

- **Mt Pleasant Rezoning** – a map amendment to bring the property into consistency with moderate commercial designation of the Comprehensive Plan
- **Square 37-** a map amendment has been proposed to bring the property into consistency with the high density mixed- use designation of Comprehensive Plan
- **Waterside Mall** - The Comp Plan calls for the construction of 4<sup>th</sup> Street through the site and the PUD for the site will help accomplish this goal
- **Building Height** – this project includes several other actions such as defining height, defining finished grade and height as measured from H Street.
- **Arcade text amendment-** this allows for the existing arcades to be enclosed
- **Open space** Zone- this text amendment proposes a Waterfront open space zone with limited activities that will animated the waters edge
- **MPD text amendment** – to create a use category;
- **Square 369-** rezone as part of Convention Center area

## **Zoning Consistency Completed**

- **2nd and F Street, NE-** a map amendment that brought the property into consistency with the moderate-density commercial designation of Comprehensive Plan
- **Florida and NY Avenues** - a map amendment that brought the property into consistency with the high-density commercial designation of Comprehensive Plan
- **Capitol Hill Overlay-** a text amendment was prepared that provided for flexibility in the residential requirement of second floor use in the Cap Hill commercial areas
- **MedStar-** rezoned to allow for hospital expansion
- **Woodies** – Zoning completed to require mixed use
- **Tree and Slope overlay** – applied to steep slopes and sensitive areas of Forest Hills

#### **b. Historic Preservation**

Before reviewing historic preservation accomplishments for the year, I want to take the opportunity to introduce to the Council the new head of the preservation office, Lisa Burcham. Lisa has over 12 years of preservation experience at the local, state and federal levels. Before joining the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1997, where she has been working to build preservation partnerships at the local and statewide levels across the country, she was the Executive Director of the Historic Preservation League of Oregon and a private preservation consultant. She comes with a proven track record and the praise of all who have worked with her. Her experience in preservation

partnerships will be uniquely valuable in helping us develop closer working relationships with neighborhood organizations, ANC's, preservation groups and small and large businesses across the city.

During the past year, the Historic Preservation Office has continued to strengthen its role within the Office of Planning, while still handling an unprecedented volume of work resulting from vigorous public initiatives and the city's vibrant economy.

### **Record Levels of Preservation Work**

During FY02, the HPO and Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) conducted a record number of project reviews in response to an unprecedented level of construction both downtown and throughout the city's 25 neighborhood historic districts.

Enforcement activity remained strong, and the volume of Federal projects, certified rehabilitations, community grant projects, and historic landmark and district designations also increased. This record workload included the following:

- The HPO conducted 4049 permit and related reviews in FY02, *a 47% increase over the number reviewed in FY01 and a 152% increase over 1999 levels.*
- Enforcement activity in FY02 entailed more than 650 project inspections and 148 infraction and violation notices. *The HPO hired a second historic preservation inspector in FY02 to improve enforcement capability and promote compliance with the preservation law.*

- The SHPO made 147 determinations of eligibility and conducted 110 reviews of Federal projects under Section 106 authority, *including an unprecedented number and complexity of projects resulting from increased security demands at national monuments and major federal buildings.*
- The preservation staff reviewed 13 certifications of proposed rehabilitation, 5 certifications of completed work, and 154 easement certifications for Federal tax benefits. The completed projects represent a total private investment of \$63.8 million in certified rehabilitation costs and \$67.1 million in related development costs, *a level of per capita investment that ranks the District higher than nearly all of the states.*
- The HPRB designated nine historic landmarks, one new historic district, and one historic district expansion—*a significant increase over the seven landmark designations in FY01 and none in FY00.*
- The HPO also increased the amount of its assistance to neighborhood organizations this past year, expending a total of \$333,000 in grant money for 11 successfully completed projects. This represents a 35% increase over the previous year's grant total of \$245,000, *and most significantly, it represents the first time the office committed all of its federal grant funds to specific projects by the end of the first year of availability. This improvement will significantly*

*enhance effective use of grant funds by avoiding conflicts with grant expiration deadlines.*

## **Revitalizing Neighborhoods**

As the record of the past year shows, historic preservation is vital to many of the city's top-priority economic development and planning initiatives. Historic preservation reviews help to sustain sensitive, high-quality development and promote communication between developers and neighborhoods—not just downtown, but along 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets, on Capitol Hill, in Shaw, Mount Vernon Square, Columbia Heights, Anacostia, Takoma Park, and Tenleytown.

Preservation reviews also improve the quality of work undertaken by District agencies as they upgrade and modernize schools, recreation centers, and other public facilities throughout the city. The office has developed a strong and mutually supportive working relationship with the D.C. Public Schools, and has helped guide the renovation or replacement of 22 schools during the past two years.

Historic preservation also played a vital and effective role in mediating neighborhood development conflicts during the past year. The HPO successfully guided the resolution of long-running development conflicts over the **Tivoli Theater**, **Tenleytown Firehouse**, and **Cleveland Park Giant**—allowing each of these projects to proceed to construction while preserving historic features and neighborhood ambiance. Impending disputes over private school construction at Owl's Nest and Rosedale were avoided. Owner

objections to the **Grant Road Historic District** and the **Capitol Hill Historic District expansion** were resolved prior to the designation hearings. Innumerable disagreements among neighbors over private home expansion and infill development were also settled day-to-day by patient and skillful staff work and dialogue.

But historic preservation is more than just a regulatory program. It offers direct benefits to the community and city planners as revitalization and the renewal of civic pride gains strength across the city. Major initiatives like the **African-American Heritage Sites** program will result in a citywide commemorative trail marking as many as 200 significant historical sites. New **street signage** developed in coordination with the District Department of Transportation will readily identify all of our city's historic districts. Both of these programs, undertaken in cooperation with the D.C. Heritage Tourism Coalition, are intended as much for residents as for visitors, and will raise awareness of the richness and diversity of neighborhoods across the city.

Now that preservation is fully integrated into OP, it has also begun to play a more effective role in planning efforts, not just for key facilities like **St. Elizabeths Hospital**. Historic surveys and educational efforts are being keyed into strategic neighborhood plans and small area planning studies—as last year's **Near Northeast Historic Study** supported planning for the H Street corridor, and this year's **Tenleytown Survey** will support planning for the Upper Wisconsin Avenue corridor.

## Preservation in the Wards

The Historic Preservation Office was involved in projects throughout all wards of the city during the past year—reviewing development, supporting community organizations with funding for historic surveys, and helping to develop public education materials that can be distributed in the neighborhoods. Some of the most visible projects in each ward have included:

### WARD 1

- The HPO continued to coordinate with the developer, community, and office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development on plans for rehabilitation of the **Tivoli Theater**. The parties concluded a Memorandum of Agreement, and with the assistance of Councilmember Graham and Deputy Mayor Eric Price, the project has obtained additional money to support the restoration work on the building. .
- The preservation office supported the owners of a half dozen apartment buildings—including Clifton Terrace and Trinity Towers in **Columbia Heights**, and the **Roosevelt** on 16<sup>th</sup> Street—in seeking historic landmark designation and certification for federal rehab tax credits. And these credits have been used not just for market-rate housing. In Mount Pleasant, they were a critical part of the equation that allowed Victory Housing to rescue **1611 Park Road** from condemnation and reopen it for low- and moderate-income housing.

- The HPO also reviewed DCPS plans for reconstruction of the **Bell-Lincoln Multicultural High School**, and rehabilitation of the old Wilson Teacher's College for the **Carlos Rosario Center**. Using \$30,000 in HPO grant funds, the D.C. Preservation League completed an update of the 1989 survey of Columbia Heights, with improved documentation on the historical and architectural significance of the neighborhood.
- At **Banneker Recreation Center**, the HPO assisted the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation with plans for modernization and expansion of the public swimming facilities. The preservation office supported the National Historic Landmark designation of buildings on the **Howard University Yard**, and worked with civic organizations, DCRA, and property owners to protect buildings from deterioration—including the **Mary Church Terrell House**, another national landmark.

## WARD 2

- In Ward 2's revitalizing intown neighborhoods, the HPO worked with developers on the designs for construction of major new apartment buildings and numerous commercial, retail and residential rehabs—particularly in the Logan Circle and 14<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhoods. Retail and apartment conversions of several **14<sup>th</sup> Street auto showrooms** were high on the list of exciting new projects.

- In Shaw, the HPO continued to provide leadership and direction for the Historic Preservation fund established by the Washington Convention Center Authority. The \$1 million fund is being used for grants and loans to help owners fix up historic houses and commercial buildings near the center, and to fund streetscape and public art improvements. The HPO also reviewed plans for more than a dozen commercial and residential infill projects in the **Shaw**, **Blagden Alley**, and **Mount Vernon Square** historic districts flanking the Convention Center. At the request of the neighborhood, the office awarded grant funds to ANC 2-C for a survey of the Shaw East neighborhood for possible historic district expansion.
- In Downtown, the HPO helped jump-start the stalled **Atlantic Building** project, and to keep progress moving on plans for the **Woodward & Lothrop, Carroll Square**, Terrell Square and **Calvary Baptist Church** projects, each of which includes historic preservation, retail, and arts use as key components along with commercial office expansion. The office was heavily involved in the highly acclaimed **International Spy Museum** and **Hotel Monaco**, both of which opened last year, as well as the **United Mine Workers** and **Jefferson Place** residential projects, which are moving toward completion.

### WARD 3

- At **Alban Towers**, the HPO staff completed the final federal tax incentive certification of the award-winning \$60 million restoration of the historic apartment

building. At the **Wisconsin Avenue Sears** in Tenleytown, the HPO worked closely with the project team in reviewing and finalizing the designs for adding 200 apartments on top of upgraded retail space in the historic landmark at the Tenleytown Metro station.

- Also in Tenleytown, the preservation office helped resolve owner objections before designation of the **Grant Road Historic District**. With the support of Councilmember Patterson, we worked to conclude an agreement providing for the preservation and expansion of the **Tenleytown Firehouse**. We used \$24,900 in federal funds for a **Tenleytown Survey** of historic resources to complement and support OP's Upper Wisconsin Avenue planning study.
- In Forest Hills, with strong support from the neighborhood, the preservation office worked to achieve historic landmark protection for the **Owl's Nest**, which helped to forestall an impending dispute over demolition and land development. In Cleveland Park, we helped resolve similar community concerns at **Rosedale**, and we helped forge a Memorandum of Agreement allowing for expansion of the **Cleveland Park Giant**.

#### WARD 4

- In **Takoma Park**, the HPO guided developers in the review of two major projects—on Carroll Street and Blair & Cedar Streets—that will create more than

100 new housing units and neighborhood retail immediately adjacent to the Takoma Metro station.

- Using \$5,000 in HPO grant funds, the preservation office also assisted Historic Takoma, Inc. in completing a survey of blocks around the **Takoma Park Historic District** to study the possibility of expanding the boundaries of the district. In the citywide **Places of Worship Survey**, more than 50 congregations and buildings were documented throughout Ward 4.
- The preservation office worked with D.C. Public Schools in reviewing plans for renovation and modernization of **Brightwood Elementary School** and **MacFarland Middle School**.

#### WARD 5

- The HPO funded a \$20,000 project undertaken by the Brookland CDC to update and augment a 1987 historic resources survey of the **Brookland** neighborhood. The office also funded a \$20,000 project to Parsons Engineering to survey and document historic features at the city-owned portion of the **McMillan Water Treatment Plant**.
- The office coordinated with both the community and the office of Deputy Mayor Eric Price on the historic landmark designation of Crummell School. Pending historic landmark designations are also on file for former firehouses in

**Brookland, Bloomingdale, and Langdon**, and in the upcoming year the office will work with both D.C. agencies and community groups on designation and adaptive reuse of these community resources.

- The HPO reviewed modernization plans for **McKinley High School**, and has begun work with D.C. Public Schools on modernization plans for **Slowe and Wheatley Elementary Schools**.

#### WARD 6

- Working with the Near Northeast Citizens Against Crime and Drugs, the HPO guided the \$30,000 **Near Northeast** historic study to a successful conclusion. An overview of the neighborhood's unique history as a distinct middle- and working-class neighborhood is now available for broad public access in community publications and on the internet.
- As the city's largest historic district by far, the **Capitol Hill Historic District** received a large share of HPO staff attention during the year. The HPO and HPRB provided ongoing design review services not just for large projects like the **Bryan School** and **Lovejoy School** residential conversions, but also for the dozens of smaller infill and home improvement projects that allow HPO staff to provide hands-on guidance and technical assistance to homeowners.

- The HPO also supported new designations of important historic properties in the ward, including the **Capitol Hill Historic District** expansion at the Navy Yard, the **Atlas Theater** and **Mott Motors/Plymouth Theater** on H Street NE, and the **Gales School** on Massachusetts Avenue, NW.
- The HPO is vigorously pursuing egregious preservation law violations such as those involving **20 9<sup>th</sup> Street NE** and the “shotgun house” at **1229 E Street SE**. Citywide, **historic preservation enforcement** is a primary focus of the day-to-day activity of the preservation staff. The Office of Planning hired a second historic preservation inspector, and is now realizing the benefits of an improved enforcement capability. The office has also prepared a comprehensive revision of the HPRB regulations—including rules to address **demolition by neglect** and coordination with the Board of Condemnation—and will complete implementation of these regulations in the upcoming year.

#### WARD 7

- In order to strengthen its assistance to local neighborhoods, the HPO hired an education and outreach coordinator using federal grant funds. At the invitation of the **Deanwood** community, one of the coordinator’s first major projects is to work with leaders in that neighborhood, together with OP’s neighborhood planning staff, to investigate the potential for a historic district designation, and to address problems of abandoned and deteriorated housing.

- With the research phase of the **African-American Heritage Trail** now complete, the HPO has identified almost a dozen sites in Ward 7 that help to tell the multiple stories of African American history and culture in the city. In the upcoming year, the office will be working with the Cultural Heritage Tourism and historian Dr. Marya McQuirter to develop a publication and heritage trail to ensure that these sites are recognized and interpreted for both visitors and residents.
- The HPO worked with D.C. Public Schools on modernization plans for **Sousa Junior High School** and **Smothers Elementary Schools**, and concurred in plans for demolition and replacement of Thomas Elementary and H.D. Woodson High School.

#### WARD 8

- The HPO staff, in coordination with both zoning and revitalization planners at OP, completed the review of plans for the city's state-of-the-art **Unified Call Center** on the east campus of **St. Elizabeths Hospital**, and began coordination on future plans for the entire site. The HPO review will ensure protection of important historic buildings and landscape features on this National Historic Landmark campus.
- The HPO completed a \$30,000 neighborhood history grant to Frederick Douglass Gardens to research, write and update the **Anacostia Story**, a history project

designed to involve many of the community's older residents and to document their neighborhood memories.

**The HPO reviewed plans for Birney Elementary, and began work with D.C. Public Schools on modernization plans for Anacostia High School, and Kramer Middle School.**

#### **IV. Comprehensive Plan**

In March of 2002, the Council passed Resolution 14-431, which formally delayed the process for amending the Comprehensive Plan and tasked the Office of Planning to undertake a review of the Comprehensive Plan and process. We embarked on this effort in late spring of 2002, by meeting with key neighborhood, institutional, business and other leaders in the District to learn the strengths and weaknesses of the Plan from their perspectives.

The work we undertook with a 29-member task force yielded the following key themes related to the structure of planning in the District:

**1. Creating a Long-Range Planning division.** When I was appointed Director of the Office of Planning, there were some immediate steps needed to improve the planning function in the District. These included: providing greater technical support to the Zoning Commission and the Board of Zoning Adjustment, handling key and highly

controversial college and university campus plans, incorporating Historic Preservation into the Office of Planning, working with all neighborhoods across the city to develop short-term action plans – because many told us that they wanted things addressed now – not in 5 or 10 years, initiate the Waterfront Plan before public and private deals were made that would make the ideas of connecting communities to their waterfront only a dream, and much more.

Currently, the Office of Planning needs to provide the city an equally important function – to take a long-term view of where the city should go and help shape that future before development transactions, public sector arrangements and other policy decisions are finalized. What's more, the time has come to strengthen our ability to analyze what is happening to our city to help policy and decision-makers make better-informed decisions.

## **2. Strengthening how city agencies can implement the city's long-term vision.**

Many other cities across the country have learned that the CIP – in addition to zoning – is a key tool for implementing a city's long-term Comprehensive Plan. Planning Offices in cities such as Denver, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Kansas City, and Minneapolis have learned that the planning is uniquely qualified to help in the CIP process. This is largely due to the fact that they are responsible for monitoring and updating the Comprehensive Plan -- and as such -- have a comprehensive perspective on how capital projects can realize the city's vision.

Turning to the specific work of our assessment, our office has worked diligently since late Spring to analyze the Comprehensive Plan – to determine if it is up-to-date and current, whether it is appropriately linked to other plans and implementation tools, and how to make the amendment process accessible, fair and transparent.

The Council and the Mayor worked to create a 29-member task force, which started meeting with our office in October of 2002. We also conducted in-depth research of Best Practices in other cities across the country and in the United Kingdom's capitol city, London.

Chairman Cropp just held a public roundtable on Comp Plan process recommendations.

Several of the key findings that were discussed there include:

- The Comp Plan is 20 years old and is in need of updating
- Tools to implement the Plan could be strengthened
- There are many plans the District government has developed; its crucial to understand what needs to be linked to the Comp Plan and what does not
- The amendment process is lengthy, more upfront analysis is needed of amendments and increasing overall transparency throughout the entire process needs to be improved

I look forward to presenting to the Mayor and Council the final recommendations for strengthening the Comp Plan later this month.

## **V. Planning Design and Information Technology**

During FY 2002 the Office of Planning made significant strides in professionalizing the way it manages computerized information and technology. Staff from the newly revitalized Planning, Design, and Information Technology Division began the transition from simply using Geographic Information Systems technology to draw nice maps to using it to help organize and extend what we know about the City.

We did make a lot of maps for use within OP, for other agencies, and for the public. Our dedicated mapping staff responded to over 700 requests for maps, and delivered over 2000 different maps. Requests were divided roughly evenly between Agency staff (at OP and elsewhere) and members of the public. These statistics do not include the maps made by OP's front-line planning staff themselves. Neither do they include the many tables, charts, and statistics delivered to a variety of customers by PDIT's Census State Data Center staff.

However, much of our behind-the-scenes progress was in technology and in standards. We updated our technological capabilities across the board, putting new software, hardware, and staff in place to meet the information management demands of a growing agency. We augmented our aging ArcView 3.x GIS technology with DC-standard ArcView 8.x technology. We added multi-user editing and data-management capabilities using ArcSDE and database software to allow for more structured methods

for managing our GIS data (we also adopted more structured techniques for managing the rest of OP's electronic files.) We added ArcIMS Internet mapping capabilities so we can complement OCTO's DC Atlas tools with our own SmartMap product. We upgraded our existing PCs, servers, and software licenses to meet OP's requirements. And we brought on board 3 full-time GIS staff to guide OP in using these technologies, including our GIS Manager, Dr. Richman. I am pleased to announce that just a few days ago Dr. Richman was certified by OCTO as one of the District government's first Certified Information Officers.

We developed formal standards for how we manage and present spatial information, from how we maintain our internal files to the look-and-feel of our maps. We developed extensions to the out-of-the-box GIS tools to leverage our GIS investments for all OP staff. We developed a formal agency-wide GIS and IT operating plan to give our efforts focus. And we did this working closely with the staff of the Chief Technology Officer and with the District-wide GIS Steering Committee so the fruits of these efforts can be shared by other government agencies.

More importantly, we began to capitalize on this progress to meet critical needs within OP and elsewhere. We used the new tools we developed to automate production of the hundreds of maps used in the Strategic Neighborhood Action Plans (SNAPs.) Those maps *could* have been done by hand – but it would have taken much longer, quality would be uneven, and we'd never have been able to update them near press time with the latest information available. We pitched in to help the Board of Elections and Ethics

produce revised ANC and SMD maps this year, and we used the same investments in technology to generate hundreds of individual maps for that effort – also on a tight timetable and with last-minute revisions.

We expect these trends to continue in FY03. As we deploy new GIS technologies to help us manage and distribute information about the District more efficiently, we'll have more opportunities to use the information we already have analytically to help us make the best possible plans for the City's future.

## **VI. Operations**

Last year, I informed the Committee that one of my priorities for FY 2002 would be to strengthen the operational capacity of the Office of Planning. I am proud to announce that in the past twelve months we have achieved a high level of operational support within the agency. I recognize that the Office of Planning's operations staff receives little recognition outside of the agency. The accomplishments of our operations staff can be measured in two ways: missteps that do not happen and actual performance measures. On both counts, the systems and operations infrastructure in the Office of Planning can be counted among the best in the District government.

During FY 2002, our operations team was fully deployed. At the beginning of the fiscal year we hired a human resources manager and an Associate Director for finance and strategic operations. Mid-way through the fiscal year we hired an operations manager.

Under the leadership of our Chief of Staff, this team has achieved tremendous results, including improvements in our customer service, human resources, contracting and procurement and LSDBE ratings. I especially want to highlight the fact that the Office of Planning achieved 130% of its LSDBE contracting goals.

I am proud of the fact that during FY 2002 our customer service ratings steadily improved, although even more improvement is needed given the public engagement role the office plays. Additionally, for the second year running, in FY 2002 the Office of Planning achieved a 100% compliance rating in adherence to the Office of Personnel's Performance Management Program.

We have begun to develop a system of uniform contracting procedures and have begun to build a financial modeling system so that we can better allocate resources to projects.

In the area of staffing, the Office of Planning has filled 15 positions since last year at this time. In our Historic Preservation Office, we filled four positions – an additional HP inspector, an HP specialist, and architectural historian, and, effective today, a new Associate Director for Historic Preservation, Lisa Burcham. In Development Review, we filled four positions – two zoning and development review specialists and two support staff. Our GIS program added two new professional staff. In Revitalization Planning, we hired a planner and one support staff, and in Neighborhood Planning we backfilled one Neighborhood Planner position (for Ward 8). Finally, in Operations and the Office of the Director, we hired an Operations Manager and an Executive Assistant.

As is the case in any maturing organization, we also has some turnover in the last year. In our Neighborhood Planning Division, four positions were vacated, as three neighborhood planners moved to other positions and our Junior Planner went back to graduate school. Two other positions were vacated in the last year, one in Development Review and one in Operations.

Like all District agencies, the reductions we agreed to take in FY 2003 have hit us hard. Among the reductions to the Office of Planning were cuts to our Personal Services (PS) budget. To achieve the required savings, we developed a staggered hiring schedule in September. Instead of continuing our aggressive hiring efforts into the new fiscal year, the District's budget shortfall and temporary hiring freeze forced us to put on hold several of our recruiting efforts. By hiring employees later in the fiscal year, we are able to achieve more than \$160,000 in salaries and benefits savings, while still backfilling and hiring for new positions in FY 2003.

We're on schedule to fill four vacant positions shortly. Within the next few weeks we anticipate filling two positions in our Long Range Planning Division: Deputy Director and Comprehensive Planning Coordinator, both of which are key to keeping us on track in our Comp Plan efforts. Our GIS program will be fully staffed by early spring, and we plan to backfill a recently vacated Development Review Specialist position soon. The Office of Planning hired an Operations Manager in April of 2002, in an attempt to improve the operational infrastructure. The emphasis was placed on the development

and implementation of key initiatives outlined by the Mayor to improve the quality of service provided by District Agencies. Prior to coming onboard, the Office of planning pursuance to meet standards in many of the areas identified was unsuccessful. It was observed that the fundamental problem was the lack of a point person designated to the implementation and delivery of systems in-line with the agencies performance goals. The Operations Manager has aggressively worked to strengthen the areas of weaknesses by reviewing and assessing current effectiveness and making changes where appropriate. Through this process, the inclusion of procedural guidelines, have been implemented into the agencies strategic operational plans as a baseline for performance measurement. The objective for operations is to meet and exceed the Mayor's performance standards and to ensure that the agency is providing the highest level of service to staff and constituents.

Other highlights from the agency's operation improvement plan include:

1. **Risk Management.** Established the agency Risk Management Program and selected a counsel which convenes monthly and coordinates the agencies Risk management efforts. Currently taking classes to secure the ARM certification, which is a requirement for each District agency and will facilitate the agencies ability to meet Risk Management standards.

2. **Recycling.** Working with key individuals from Property Management to introduce Recycling into the agency culture. Recycling bins coupled with the instructional

guidelines have been posted on each floor, along with individual bins for each office. Every employee has been made aware of this initiative and ongoing training is provided for existing and new employees. The Office Of Planning Recycling program is 100% compliant.

**3. Customer Service.** Established agency customer service program in compliance with the Districts initiative to ensure all government operations deliver high quality service. 100% compliant in voicemail greetings, along with correspondence, and 48 hour return call responsiveness. Continuous improvement plans are in place to meet and exceed requirements in all areas of Customer service.

**4. Emergency Preparedness.** Established the agency Emergency Preparedness program, and represent the agency at all the Emergency Preparedness Counsel meetings. Mandates from these meeting are brought back to the agency and incorporated into the agencies operations. Successfully completed the agencies Emergency response plan with impending inclusions of Biological Terrorism Procedures.

**5. Procurement.** The Office of Planning has grown tremendously within the last few years, which has warranted the need to review spatial needs. As a result, it appears that the agency is need of reconfiguring current space or relocating to another location. With the current budgetary restraints, it's been necessary to exercise other options.

Worked with procurement officer for purchase of system furniture to create additional workspace for an expanding agency.

6. **Space Planning.** Worked with Property Management to locate and secure additional office space within the building, however; due to recent budget cuts, this space will be subleased or rented to another agency.

7. **IT Management.** Agency employee's expressed a need to update current equipment to be able to run new software. Worked with IT administrator and GIS Manager to identify the need and purchase of new computers for office employees. Inventoried IT equipment and logged and dispensed of all outdated units to the District surplus warehouse.

8. **Fleet Management.** Created agency fleet management program that coordinates service and maintains operations of agency vehicles.

9. **Staff Coverage.** Established rotational front office coverage to ensure agency main numbers are staffed at all times during hours of operation. This effort was put in place to increase the level of service to customers and to become compliant within the District's Customer Service Initiative.

10. **Employee Orientation.** Established new employee orientation, and provide office training for Customer service and Risk Management awareness.

**11. Operational Supplies.** Instituted a system to ensure that the office is adequately staffed with office supplies at all times as a mechanism to provide effective service.

## **VII. Wrap-up**

In closing, I think it is important to reiterate how important the Mayor's and Council's support has been to the Office of Planning. I am proud of the Office of Planning's accomplishments, and I believe that the Council should be too. We have achieved what I believe to be an unprecedented level of productivity, releasing almost one plan a week. We have not only gone to and listened to citizens in each neighborhood in the city, but our efforts have resulted in actual improvements in those neighborhoods – improvements that people can see and point to with pride every single day. And, I have a great staff, which, at every level of the agency, has a strong commitment to the overall improvement of the District of Columbia. We can look back on FY 2002 with pride, but we also need to look ahead with a realistic view of what lies ahead.

The current fiscal crisis has resulted in the Office of Planning's non-personal services budget being reduced to a level that could well undercut the funding levels imposed on the Office before Mayor Williams took office and before the last Council (which was the same as the current one) was sworn-in. In anticipation of this near-emergency situation, and based on Chairman Crop's strong leadership, the Office of Planning is receiving in FY 2003 capital funds to help support its planning functions and to help fund

planning studies. The Office is scheduled to receive capital funds in FY 2004 as well. After that, at the end of FY 2004, nothing is currently planned. To be very blunt about this matter, without continued funding from the CIP, instead of one plan a week we risk returning to the days of one plan a year. I am working with the CFO and the City Administrator to explore ways of maintaining a steady source of capital money for the Office of Planning in perpetuity, and I urge the Council to support any such measure if it comes before you.

Another, related, challenge before us will be how we as a city address the inevitable growth that the District will be experiencing over the next decade. In order to sustain the levels of government service that District citizens are coming to expect under this Mayor and this Council, the tax base must expand. Quite simply, that means both retaining current residents and attracting and accommodating more people and businesses here in a way that ensures current residents participate in and receive the benefits of greater economic growth. This influx will lead to some tough policy questions about the appropriate roles of the development community and residents, downtown and neighborhood density, fair resource allocation across the city, inclusionary zoning, stimulating neighborhood economic development, and dealing with perceived gentrification. This Council and this Mayor and this Planning Director will be called upon to make some decisions and choices that may not be immediately popular but will be absolutely necessary to ensure that the District continues to grow responsibly and enjoy the consequent economic and fiscal health that all our citizens deserve.

Finally, the next twelve months will be critically important to our efforts to reform planning in the District of Columbia. I discussed the Comp Plan efforts that are under way and which will demand a large amount of resources and political will. As a result of the Comp Plan Task Force work earlier in the year, it is evident that a complete revision of the comprehensive plan is in order. This may well represent the most significant planning change in the District of Columbia over the past 30 years. We have a tremendous opportunity before us to create a foundational comprehensive plan that will serve our city for generations. This effort will require commitment, resources and will on the part of both the Council and the Mayor. I am confident, Madame Chair, that we are all up to the challenge.

In addition to the Comp Plan efforts, we will be seeking to play a greater role in advising the budget team on capital spending so that the government precious capital resources are used in a much more efficient and coordinated way than is currently the case. The Council's support for this effort will be critical, and I am excited to work with the Committee in developing this program that I believe will result in a long-lasting legacy of innovative planning in this city.

I want to thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to the Committee's continued support, and I will be happy to take any questions members of the Committee may have.